

Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With King Hussein of Jordan Aboard Air Force One

March 12, 1996

President's Health

Q. How's your cold?

The President. It's okay. Like I said, Hillary had a cough and then Chelsea was sick and I sort of got it. It'll be gone in a day or two. It's just a head cold, it's not any big deal—just from the neck up.

Q. Does it bother your ears?

The President. No.

Air Force One

Q. You know—[inaudible]—is a certified pilot of this aircraft.

The President. Right. Well, he was up there on take off. I don't know if he lifted us off or not.

King Hussein. I watched and was very impressed by the wonderful, professional team up there.

Middle East Peace Process

Q. What are you guys going to talk about?

The President. A lot of—[inaudible].

Q. Any surprises coming out of this summit, Mr. President? What do you expect?

The President. I don't know. I think a very strong statement will come out of it and that we may have some pretty good ideas come out of it for what we can all do together. I hope so. But I thank His Majesty for standing up for the right thing in the Middle East and helping to get so many other countries involved in this. He's got quite a remarkable array of people actually coming together on short notice.

Q. What would make the meeting a success?

The President. Well, I think a strong united stand for keeping the peace process going and standing against the terror as a precondition of that, because unless people are secure they can't go forward. I think that's the most important thing. And then, obviously, we want to come out with some more concrete steps. We've taken some already; we intend to take some more.

Q. Anything on Iran?

The President. Well, wait a minute, we've got to have the meeting. We haven't had the meeting yet.

Q. What about Syria? What about the lack of Syrians present?

The President. Well, I wish they were there—the Syrians—I wish they were there. But I believe that in terms of continuing the peace process and keeping commitments, that President Asad will do that. And that's very important, very important.

I hope you all get some sleep.

Q. You, too.

The President. It's 10 minutes after 10 Egyptian time—[laughter]—so watch a movie and go to bed. It's real important. You're going to have a hard day tomorrow.

NOTE: The exchange began at 10 p.m. In his remarks, the President referred to President Hafiz al-Asad of Syria. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Remarks at the Opening of the Summit of the Peacemakers in Sharm al-Sheikh, Egypt

March 13, 1996

Thank you very much, President Mubarak. Your Majesties, Your Highnesses, heads of state, heads of government, Foreign Ministers, and Mr. Secretary-General.

I'd like to begin by thanking President Mubarak for his extraordinary efforts in the last few days to convene this meeting, to host us here, and to make us feel welcome. I thank President Yeltsin, my distinguished cosponsor of the peace process, and all the rest of you who have come so far on such short notice to this very important meeting.

From all around the world we have come to the Sinai to deliver one simple, unified message: Peace will prevail. This summit is unprecedented in the history of the Middle East. It would have been inconceivable just a few short years ago. It stands as proof and promise that this region has changed for good. Leaders from Israel and the Arab world, from Europe, from Asia, from North America, 29 of us, shoulder-to-shoulder, joined in support of peace. We have gathered before to celebrate new milestones in our journey; today we join in common defense

against those who would turn us back. We are here because we know what is at stake.

In the 18 years since Egypt and Israel made a miracle at Camp David, Israelis and Arabs have changed the course of history in their lands. Step by step, courageously they have broken with the past, laying down the arms of war and opening their arms to one another. But with every milestone passed along the road of peace and progress, the enemies of peace have grown more desperate and more depraved. They know they cannot compete in the marketplace of ideas; they know they have nothing to offer but hardship and despair. And so they resort to murderous attacks that are an affront to the civilized world and to the moral precepts that lie at the core of the three faiths represented here, as President Mubarak has so eloquently stated.

In the busy streets of Jerusalem, Ashkelon, and Tel Aviv, suicide bombers launched a wave of terror to kill as many Israelis as possible—ordinary men and women riding the bus to work, families shopping for the holidays, innocent children in their Purim costumes, murdered for the blood in their veins. Our hearts go out to the people of Israel and to all the victims of these atrocities, which include also Palestinians and Americans. Many of the nations here today have experienced the nightmare of terror. Death does not discriminate among the terrorists' victims. Over the last 2 weeks, as I have said, losses were felt not only in Israeli but also in Palestinian, American, and Moroccan homes.

The hard-won achievements of the Palestinian people are under direct assault. The merchants of terror would sell out their future and trade their dreams for despair. And Arab mothers and fathers who seek a better life for their children understand the enemies of peace have targeted them, as well.

Let no one underestimate the significance of our gathering here today. Today the wall of division we face is not really between Arab and Israeli. It is instead between those who reach for a better tomorrow and those who rail against it, between those who traffic in hate and terror and those who work for peace.

To the forces of hatred and violence I say, and let us all say, you kill yourselves and others in the aim of killing peace, yet today, as you see, peace survives. And peace will grow stronger. You will not succeed. Your day has passed. You have plowed the fields of hatred, but here we are coming to reap unity and new strength to defeat you and to keep the promise and hope of peace alive.

We who have gathered in Egypt today are committed to the search for peace. Our very presence here underscores the depth of our dedication. But words and symbols are not enough. The world looks to us now for action, and we must direct our collective resolve in three specific areas. First, we must be clear in our condemnation of those who resort to terror. Violence has no place in the future we all seek for the Middle East.

Second, we must reinforce our common search for a comprehensive peace. We must press forward until the circle of peace is closed. And we must work to bring the benefits of peace to the daily lives of the people here, for if people lose their hope in peace, the terrorists will have succeeded. This would be the cruelest victory of all, and we must not let it happen.

Third, we must actively counter the terrorists with all the means at our command, combining our efforts tangibly and joining our strength to defeat their evil aims. Chairman Arafat and the Palestinian Authority are responding to that challenge. Each of us here must do our part to help them succeed in their mission. We know we cannot guarantee 100 percent success, but all of us must demand of each other and of ourselves 100 percent effort. The danger we face is urgent, the challenge is clear, but the solidarity of the peacemakers will conquer the forces of division if we will resolve to keep that solidarity.

We stand today as one not far from the mount where God gave the word to Moses, the law of humanity, tolerance, and faith that guides our way today. We are the heirs of that moral legacy whether we be Muslim or Jew or Christian. From many lands and many different traditions we come, today all speaking the language of peace.

In the Bible we are told that when they were grown, Isaac, the patriarch of the Jews,

and Ishmael, the patriarch of the Arabs, met but once. They came together at the death of Abraham, the father they shared, the father of both peoples. Today, the descendants of Isaac and Ishmael have joined together in a spirit of rebirth to secure the shared promise of a life of peace for all the peoples of this region. Those of us who come here today to stand with them must not allow the forces of the past to deny them the future they seek, that we all seek.

Let our charge go forth from the Sinai today. We will win the battle for peace.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:20 p.m. in the Orangerie Room at the Movenpick Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, President Boris Yeltsin of Russia, and Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

The President's News Conference With President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt in Sharm al-Sheikh March 13, 1996

Summit of the Peacemakers

President Mubarak. Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Once again, the nations of the world have rallied together in order to enhance peace and promote security in the Middle East. Many leaders who are not present with us today contacted us to express their solidarity and support for the objectives of the conference.

This site where the Peacemakers Summit was held was the theater of many battles in the unhappy past. Today, it has become the living symbol of the new era of peace and coexistence. Our gathering represented all worldly cultures and reflected the real concern for peace and stability in this troubled area. It is our consensus the Sharm al-Sheikh conference was a big success.

All leaders and delegates demonstrated a profound commitment to the promotion of peace and security throughout the region. All of them spoke their minds and discussed the issues in a spirit of openness, candor, and objectivity. Our discussions remained fo-

cused on the issues of peace and security. Many valuable contributions were made in the course of the two sessions we held.

There were no sharp disagreements or disputes. The interventions went beyond the customary generalities and dealt with specific points which were quite relevant to the purpose of the summit conference. The outcome of the discussions were properly reflected in the statement which has been distributed to you a while ago.

You have certainly noticed that the conference adopted a set of policies and measures in order to enhance the chance for peace and reinforce the security of all parties directly involved in the peace process. Concrete measures and mechanisms were agreed upon for the purpose of combating terror and the terrorists. All the peoples of the region view terrorism as one of the most dangerous threats to their security and stability, individually and collectively.

It is our hope that the believers in peace and reconciliation who constitute the great majority will triumph over the forces of doom and gloom. Hope will ultimately prevail over despair and fear. It is our hope also the peace process would be activated and revived without delay. As greater security and tranquility are achieved in the area, restrictive measures would be eased and lifted as soon as possible. The living conditions of the innocent people who are suffering in the aftermath of the violence should be improved markedly.

Finally, I would like to say a few words to all those wise leaders who attended the conference. I want to state in this gathering that we are indebted to each and every one of them for their significant contribution and positive spirit. The leaders of the parties who are immediately concerned exhibited their courage and vision. They spoke candidly and positively.

Our Arab brothers exemplified the true spirit of Islam and the Arab culture. Our European friends demonstrated once again that they are fully aware that our two regions are inseparable. Our destiny is one and the same. The cosponsors of the peace process showed the depth of their commitment to peace and security in the Middle East. Each participant in the conference was equally helpful.